



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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State proposes European gypsy moth treatments in Kitsap County and Seattle

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) announced today it is proposing to treat two locations next spring for the destructive European gypsy moth; a 200-acre site near Keyport in rural Kitsap County, and a 12-acre site in the Roanoke neighborhood in Seattle.

The Kitsap County site consists of the Evergreen Ridge housing development and some adjacent properties. The Roanoke site is centered on Franklin Avenue between Roanoke and Edgar streets. State entomologists believe reproducing populations of the gypsy moth are present at both sites.

WSDA is proposing to treat the two sites with *Bacillus thuringiensis var. kurstaki* (*Btk*), a biological insecticide used in the past to keep the gypsy moth out of Washington. *Btk* is registered for use in the U.S. by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and is found naturally in the environment. *Btk*-based insecticides are used by many organic farmers and have a proven safety record with people, pets, birds, livestock, fish, and many other insects such as bees.

WSDA said treatments at the Kitsap County site need to be applied with aircraft because of its large size and inaccessibility of ground equipment to many trees to be treated. Treatments at the Roanoke site will be applied with ground equipment. Three to five applications of the insecticide will be conducted at each site, three to 14 days apart.

Before a decision is reached, WSDA will comply with the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). WSDA will consult with other state and federal agencies, and prepare documents that assess the impact of the proposal on the environment. Two documents will be made available for public review and comment -- a SEPA checklist and a NEPA draft environmental assessment.

The gypsy moth is one of the worst forest pest insects ever brought into the U.S. It attacks more than 500 species of trees and shrubs, causing millions of dollars of environmental and economic damage in the U.S. annually. The moth is permanently established in 19 states in the East and upper Midwest.

The gypsy moth has been detected in Washington state every year since 1977, but permanent populations have not been established because of aggressive trapping and eradication programs.

"We've kept permanent populations of the moth out of the state for 30 years," said Jim Marra, managing entomologist with WSDA. "We want that record to continue."

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Residents whose properties are being proposed for treatment will receive written information from the state Department of Agriculture in January 2005. In addition, open houses will be held in both communities in January or February to answer questions on the proposed treatments.

Sixty-eight gypsy moths were caught at 24 sites statewide this summer. Twenty moths were caught near the Evergreen Ridge development, and five in the Roanoke neighborhood. In addition, alternate life stages (egg masses and pupal cases) were found on Franklin Avenue between Roanoke and Edgar streets in the Roanoke neighborhood.

For more information on the proposed WSDA treatments, call the agency's toll-free hotline (1-800-443-6684) or see the WSDA Web site at www.agr.wa.gov and click on "Gypsy Moth." For more information on the health effects of *Btk* and other control methods, see the Washington State Department of Health Web site at www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Pest/egm/health-info-egm-control.htm.

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